

1 **CLAIMS**

2 1. A data network comprising:

3 a plurality of computing devices, coupled to the network, to facilitate
4 network access by one or more participants; and

5 a data server, coupled to the data network and responsive to one or more of
6 the plurality of computing devices, the data server including:

7 a storage medium to store at least one financial account for each of
8 the plurality of participants; and

9 a financial transaction manager, coupled to the memory device and
10 selectively invoked by a participant, to manage access to and manipulation
11 of financial account assets to effect requested financial transactions with
12 any network participant or non-participant.

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14 2. A data network according to claim 1, wherein the financial account is
15 electronically linked to an account of the participant at a financial institution.

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17 3. A data network according to claim 2, wherein the account of the
18 participant is one of a checking account, a savings account, a line of credit, and a
19 money market account maintained by a banking institution, or a services account
20 associated with another commercial enterprise.

21
22 4. A data network according to claim 1, wherein the financial account is
23 one of a checking account, a savings account, a line of credit, and a money market
24 account maintained by a banking institution.

1 5. A data network according to claim 1, wherein the computing devices
2 is one of a personal computer, a kiosk, a telephone and a set-top box having
3 sufficient resources to enable the participant to access the data server and utilize
4 the financial transaction manager.

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6 6. A data network according to claim 1, further comprising a financial
7 service center having a plurality of data servers including the data server.

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9 7. A data network according to claim 1, wherein the data server is
10 controlled by a financial institution.

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12 8. A data network according to claim 1, wherein the financial
13 transaction manager selectively transfers assets from a first participant's account to
14 a second participant's account in response to a request by the first participant to
15 transfer such assets.

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17 9. A data network according to claim 8, wherein each of the first and
18 second participants are individual consumers.

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20 10. A data network according to claim 8, wherein the first participant
21 does not have a priori knowledge of the second participant's account information,
22 but identifies the second participant from a list of network participants.

1 11. A data network according to claim 10, wherein the second
2 participant is identified by one or more of a name, an alias, a physical address, a
3 virtual address, or an email address.

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5 12. A data network according to claim 1, wherein the financial
6 transaction manager selectively receives assets for deposit in an account of a
7 participant.

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9 13. A data network according to claim 12, wherein the assets are
10 received from a brokerage at the request of the participant.

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12 14. A data network according to claim 12, wherein the assets are
13 received from an employer as compensation to the participant.

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15 15. A data network according to claim 1, wherein the financial
16 transaction manager prompts a participant for payment authorization in response to
17 a request for payment received from a network service.

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19 16. A data network according to claim 15, wherein the network service
20 is an electronic auction service.

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22 17. A data network according to claim 15, wherein the network service
23 is an electronic retail service.

1 18. A data network according to claim 15, wherein the financial
2 transaction manager transfers assets from an account specified by the user to an
3 account specified in the request to cover the requested payment, upon
4 authorization of the participant.

5

6 19. A data network according to claim 18, wherein the financial
7 transaction manager determines whether to honor the participants payment when
8 the specified account has insufficient assets to cover the requested payment.

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10 20. A data network according to claim 19, wherein the financial
11 transaction manager utilizes a growing trust model to determine whether to honor
12 the payment when the specified account has insufficient assets to cover the
13 requested payment.

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15 21. A data network according to claim 19, wherein the financial
16 transaction manager automatically accesses a line of credit associated with the
17 participant to honor the payment when the specified account has insufficient assets
18 to cover the requested payment.

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20 22. A data network according to claim 21, wherein the financial
21 transaction manager notifies the participant of the insufficient funds and that the
22 line of credit has been accessed to honor the requested payment.

1 23. A data network according to claim 15, wherein the financial
2 transaction manager issues an instruction to have a check issued and sent to an
3 address specified by the request, upon authorization of the participant.

4

5 24. A data network according to claim 23, wherein the issued check
6 includes a uniform resource locator (URL) address of a web page offered by the
7 data server where the recipient can establish an account.

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9 25. A data network according to claim 24, wherein the check includes
10 an offer of free assets, credited to a newly established account created by the
11 recipient of the check.

12

13 26. A storage medium having stored thereon a plurality of executable
14 instructions which, when executed, implement a financial transaction manager
15 according to claim 1.

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17 27. A financial service center, selectively accessed by users on a data
18 network using a computing device, the financial service center comprising:

19 a user interface, through which a user accesses an account associated with
20 the user;

21 one or more storage devices, to store and maintain account information for
22 each of the users; and

23 a financial transaction manager, responsive to the user interface and
24 coupled to the one or more storage devices, to manage access to and control assets
25 of user accounts in response to user interaction with the user interface to enable the

1 user to conduct financial transactions with another user or non-user of the financial
2 service center.

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4 **28.** A financial service center according to claim 27, wherein the user
5 interface is series of instructions issued to a computing device of the user to create
6 a web page at the computing device.

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8 **29.** A financial service center according to claim 27, wherein the user
9 interface is a series of instructions issued to an email client executing on a
10 computing device of the participant.

11

12 **30.** A financial service center according to claim 27, wherein the
13 financial transaction manager selectively transfers assets from a first user's
14 account to a second user's account in response to a request by the first user to
15 transfer such assets.

16

17 **31.** A financial service center according to claim 27, wherein the
18 financial transaction manager causes a check to be printed and sent to another at
19 the request of a user.

20

21 **32.** A financial service center according to claim 31, wherein the check
22 includes an offer to create an account at the financial service center.

23

24 **33.** A financial service center according to claim 30, wherein each of the
25 first and second users are individual consumers.

1 **34.** A financial service center according to claim 30, wherein the first
2 user does not have a priori knowledge of the second user's account information,
3 but identifies the second participant from a list of network participants provided by
4 the financial transaction manager.

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6 **35.** A financial service center according to claim 30, wherein the second
7 user is identified by one or more of the user's name, alias, or email address.

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9 **36.** A financial service center according to claim 27, wherein the
10 financial transaction manager selectively receives assets for deposit in an account
11 of a participant.

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13 **37.** A financial service center according to claim 36, wherein the assets
14 are received from a brokerage at the request of the participant.

15
16 **38.** A financial service center according to claim 36, wherein the assets
17 are received from an employer as compensation to the participant.

18
19 **39.** A financial service center according to claim 27, wherein the
20 financial transaction manager prompts a participant for payment authorization in
21 response to a request for payment received from a network service.

22
23 **40.** A financial service center according to claim 39, wherein the
24 network service is an electronic auction service.

1 **41.** A financial service center according to claim 39, wherein the
2 network service is an electronic retail service.

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4 **42.** A financial service center according to claim 39, wherein the
5 financial transaction manager transfers assets from an account specified by the
6 user to an account specified in the request to cover the requested payment, upon
7 authorization of the participant.

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9 **43.** A financial service center according to claim 42, wherein the
10 financial transaction manager determines whether to honor the participants
11 payment when the specified account has insufficient assets to cover the requested
12 payment.

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14 **44.** A financial service center according to claim 42, wherein the
15 financial transaction manager utilizes a growing trust model to determine whether
16 to honor the payment when the specified account has insufficient assets to cover
17 the requested payment.

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19 **45.** A financial service center according to claim 42, wherein the
20 financial transaction manager automatically accesses a line of credit associated
21 with the participant to honor the payment when the specified account has
22 insufficient assets to cover the requested payment.

1 **46.** A financial service center according to claim 15, wherein the
2 financial transaction manager issues an instruction to have a check issued and sent
3 to an address specified by the request, upon authorization of the participant.

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5 **47.** A financial service center according to claim 23, wherein the issued
6 check includes a uniform resource locator (URL) address of a web page offered by
7 the data server where the recipient can establish an account.

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9 **48.** A financial service center according to claim 24, wherein the check
10 includes an offer of free assets, credited to a newly established account created by
11 the recipient of the check.

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13 **49.** A storage medium having stored thereon a plurality of executable
14 instructions which, when executed, implement a financial service center according
15 to claim 27.

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19 **50.** This invention concerns a system and associated methods for
20 facilitating personal electronic financial transactions.

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23 **51.** A storage medium having stored thereon a plurality of executable
24 instructions which, when executed, implement the financial transaction manager of
25 claim 1.

1 **52.** A method for conducting business comprising:

2 receiving a request to issue a check to a recipient from a consumer; and

3 including on the check an offer to receive future funds via an electronic

4 financial account with a pre-printed unique access code for the account.

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6 **53.** A method for soliciting new users to utilize an electronic financial

7 network, the method comprising:

8 receiving a request to perform a financial transaction at a data server within

9 a financial data network from a requesting participant;

10 issuing a physical check drawn from an account on the financial data
11 network associated from an account of the network participant to the transaction
12 recipient, wherein the check includes an offer to utilize an account created within
13 the electronic financial network and associated with the

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15 **54.** A method for conducting business, the method comprising:

16 receiving a request for payment from a participant in an electronic financial
17 network; and

18 soliciting payment via the electronic financial network, providing the

19

20 to maintain financial data for each of the plurality of participants to
21 facilitate electronic financial transactions between participants

22

23 **55.** An apparatus comprising:

24 a storage device having stored thereon a plurality of executable instructions;

25 and

1 a processor, coupled to the storage device, to execute the instructions and
2 implement a financial transaction manager, wherein the financial transaction
3 manager enables a user to conduct financial transactions with a number of peo

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